

THE STOP BINGE EATING PODCAST

with Kirstin Sarfde

Ep #145: Competing Desires

Hi! How are you feeling? I'm feeling good. I'm doing my best to create fun and pleasure in my life and I'm loving that the New Hampshire weather is warming up so we can do more outside things like walk at the beach and on walking trails and hang out outside at our friends' and family's houses and at our house and play outdoor games and all the things! And fingers crossed this summer we'll have more opportunities for events and gatherings than last summer!

I hope you're also creating fun and pleasure in your life. Let's not let food be the funnest thing in your life. Find more.

Alright, let's dive into today's topic, competing desires.

Competing desires are something I know all of you deal with, and everyone does really whenever they're in a moment of indecision.

What it means is that you want two things and they're each competing for you to choose them. Most likely, they're opposite things. One is yes and the other is no.

There's so many ways this can show up in binge eating so I'll give you a few examples.

The most obvious is whether or not you'll binge.

You're feeling an urge to binge and you have the desire to binge but you also have a desire to not binge. Part of you wants to just give in and eat the food and part of you doesn't.

You might have competing desires about buying the food. You're in the store and you see something that looks good and you have desire to buy it and a desire not to.

You might have competing desires about applying things you've learned in this podcast. Part of you

wants to make time to do it and part of you wants to do something that's more fun instead...or eat instead.

Some people even have competing desires about stopping binge eating. Part of them desires a life without it and all the amazingness that comes along with it. But, another part of them finds comfort in it, sees something beneficial in it, and is scared of a life without it so they don't want to give it up.

And if you've wanted to join the Stop Binge Eating Group Program but haven't yet, you have competing desires there too. Part of you desires getting help and having a community of support but another part of you desires doing it on your own or not making an investment and there's most likely some other factors stopping you too but those are topics for other days.

Any time you find yourself in a moment of indecision, in a fight with yourself, in an argument with yourself about what you're going to do, you have competing desires.

You want to and you don't want to. Or you want to do this and you want to do that but you can't choose both.

And you don't know which to choose.

It can be confusing when you're wanting two things and when you're hearing both of those wants in your own mind.

There's the want that is easy and pleasurable and that avoids pain and there's the want that is harder, that will be uncomfortable, that will have delayed gratification and good feelings.

When you're feeling an urge to binge, it will be easier, pleasurable, and comfortable if you just give in and eat the food.

If you don't and you ride out the urge instead, it will be harder, uncomfortable, and you'll wait until it passes for you to get to the good feelings on the other side.

When you're in the moment of feeling that urge, the right decision for you isn't obvious. You can see something good in both decisions. Of course you want easy, pleasurable, and comfortable. But, you also want to not experience the effects of eating too much food and bingeing.

You want to wait for the good feelings but you also don't.

You want comfort now but you also don't want discomfort later.

It's not enjoyable to have competing desires like these.

They might make you feel confused, uncertain, or doubtful.

Your self-confidence might start to drop, as well as your trust in yourself because you're so unsure about what you want and what's the right decision for you and you might fear you'll make the wrong decision.

So here you are with a decision to make while you're feeling an urge to binge and you're feeling

confused. You're feeling an urge and confused so you're feeling two things that feel uncomfortable. Then you might add more discomfort to it if you're then questioning yourself on top of questioning what you're going to do. You start making this indecision mean negative things about yourself and how you feel when you're thinking about yourself negatively will just add more discomfort to how you're feeling.

You have an urge, confusion, and self-doubt. Maybe even more feelings.

When they all build up and you add discomfort on discomfort, making that choice to allow discomfort and take the more challenging route is most likely not what you're going to do if you're not skilled at allowing discomfort.

So if this sounds like you, I'm going to help you decrease the amount of discomfort you're causing for yourself so you can make the decision you truly want to be making.

Let's work backwards and first look at the self-doubt and what you're making your competing desires mean about you.

You might be making it mean there's something wrong with you just because you're in this position of confusion.

You think you shouldn't be confused. You should just want to not binge and not give in to your urge and that's it.

But that's not how our human brains work.

Back in episodes #116 and #117 I talked about working against and working with your brain.

You and your brain are not always going to agree on what you want to do.

Our brains are naturally wired to want easy pleasure and to not want pain of any kind. This is what kept us alive back in our primitive days and keeps us alive today as well.

But because of the world we live in, that has created so much easy access to pleasure and so many easy ways to avoid emotional pain, we have to consciously not succumb to all of them if we want to live thriving, fulfilling lives. We want more than to just stay alive.

So it's normal for your brain to want to binge to avoid emotional discomfort and get pleasure, and for you to not want to and be confused about this. If this happens to you, there is nothing inherently wrong with you.

All people experience this, not necessarily with bingeing, although, more people than you think do, but, everyone goes through confusion of competing desires and indecision.

So you can let go of the negative self-talk you experience when this happens. You're normal. This is how us humans in this modern world are sometimes.

It's normal for your brain to want the easy way out of emotional discomfort and into pleasure and for you to not want that if you have goals that go against that.

Now let's talk about that confusion. Let's decrease that and make a decision sooner.

The easiest way I know how to do that is to make your decisions ahead of time.

Now, life throws curve balls, we can't decide everything, we can't plan for everything.

What you can plan for, do it. You'll be happy you did once it comes time to execute your decision because it will be easier to decide, since you already did ahead of time.

What you can't plan for, you can at least know your desired outcome. You can be aware of your true wants and what you want for yourself in the big picture.

For example. You know you, your true self, doesn't want to binge. Any time an opportunity to binge presents itself, you know that what you really want is to not binge.

But your brain does want to because you've trained it to seek bingeing as a source of pleasure and a way to escape emotional discomfort.

So you need to be very clear and evident about what your true self really wants.

And not only that, but why you want it.

Have important reasons that you like and care about.

So when your brain wants to binge, you're not at all confused. You know that's not what you want, that's just a thought error, or a desire error, and your reasons why you don't want to binge are important enough to you that there's no question about what you're going to do. There's no confusion. You know. Even though your brain is telling you it wants something else, you're not considering what it wants because you're clear about what you want.

Here's an example that I just experienced in my own life this past weekend.

I haven't really been drinking for the past few months. Actually, it's been about 4 months since I've had a whole drink. I've had sips because I wanted to taste things but that's it.

This past Saturday, we were at our friends' house during the day, out on their deck, just hanging out and one of my friends came out with a really delicious looking drink. I imagined it tasted really good. I imagined how good it would make me feel. My brain told me I want one and it wouldn't be a big deal. And I bet everyone there would probably be so happy to see me drink since I hadn't in awhile and you know how people are about those things. They want everyone to drink when they are. It's so interesting how that is but, I digress.

My brain was trying to talk me into having a pretty drink like hers. But I knew it wasn't what I really wanted. I heard it, and then I talked back.

I was feeling great and was really enjoying myself and engaging in conversation. I didn't need to drink for those things, which were reasons I drank in the past – to feel good, enjoy myself more, and engage in conversation more. I was doing fine without the alcohol.

Also, one of the reasons I've been choosing to not drink is because it makes me tired. Even just one drink can. So if I drank a whole drink in the middle of the afternoon, it might make me tired for the rest of the time that we were there and for the rest of the night once we got home. I didn't want that. I was feeling good as I was and I wanted to continue that, instead of risking zoned out tiredness because I wanted 30 minutes to an hour or whatever with a buzz.

Plus, I've had issues in the past with drinking and then sleeping poorly. Now, other factors most likely contributed to my poor sleep so I don't want to only blame the alcohol but, I do believe it played a role. Anyway, the next day's forecast said it was going to be a beautiful day and we had plans to go for a walk around a nearby pond and I wanted to feel good and well-rested for that. Drinking wasn't worth the risk.

So, my brain told me the reasons why I should drink. I heard them, and I told myself why I didn't want to. My reasons for why I didn't are all important to me and I like them. I didn't need it to have more fun, I was having plenty of fun, and I wanted to feel good right then, for the rest of the day, at night after we got home and were just relaxing, and the next day, and not drinking gave me a better chance of that happening than drinking would.

I had a moment of competing desires, but I shut it down. I stood by the desire that I knew was my true desire.

And I knew this because I know it's what my past and future selves want.

I've practiced thinking about all of it. I made the decision before we even went that I wasn't going to drink. And I knew my future self would be happy with the decision to not drink when she felt good and proud of herself.

Now, my desire to drink and your desire to binge are most likely not the same intensity. Your desire is an urge, my desire to drink is more mild.

But it's because I've spent a lot of time thinking about this and re-programming my brain to make my desire be this way.

This did not happen overnight. I never felt the urge to drink like I did the urge to binge but, there were for sure tons of urges and strong desires in the past and I've been wanting to drink less for years and I've slowly gotten to where I am.

But what I want you to know is that the work of getting out of competing desires and getting clear about your true desire is mostly done outside of the moment when you're not feeling an urge and not feeling the competing desires.

I didn't wait until I was in a social setting, drinks flowing, everyone else drinking and talking about how delicious their drinks are and offering drinks to me to work on my desire.

I did a lot of thinking and practicing my thoughts when those moments were far away.

Do that for yourself when it comes to binge eating.

If you don't want to have competing desires and only have your one true desire, which is where I am with my binge eating by the way, I never desire binge eating, only sometimes overeating like I talked about in the previous episode #145, spend time getting clear on this for yourself.

Spend time thinking about what you want and why. Get clear on what you really want and why so when your brain offers you something else, there's no question about what you choose.

If all my favorite foods were in front of me right now, and I was all alone, and I knew no one would know, and even if I was sad or nervous or lonely, I wouldn't choose bingeing. I have zero desire for it, there's no desire competition. Just my true desire.

You can have this too if you stop believing your brain's story about how good it will be to binge and how much you want it and believe yourself. Believe what you know is your true desire and you'll know this if you intentionally spend time thinking about it and spend time thinking about why you want it.

So, when it comes to competing desires, here's a summary of how to handle them.

Don't judge yourself for having them. You're human, they happen to all of us.

To make your decision more quickly, decide ahead of time what you desire.

Make time to sit down with yourself and list out your true wants. Then practice thinking about them and thinking about why you want them.

Do you want to binge today or not?

Do you want to buy random snacks at the store simply because they're on sale or do you only want to buy what's on your list?

Do you want to follow your eating plan as planned or do you want to allow for impulsive purchases or eat foods people surprise you with?

Do you want to schedule in time to work on what you've learned in this podcast and from where ever else you're learning how to stop binge eating or are you just going to wing it or do it when the time presents itself?

Do you want to stop binge eating or do you want to hold onto it to deal with emotions and get pleasure in your life?

Do want help or do you want to do it on your own?

And any other desire you have. Get clear on it so you can commit to it and take action on it.

No extended confusion, decide what you want now, before your brain starts confusing you with it's emotional, in the moment, instant gratification desires.

And lastly, which I haven't talked about yet in this episode but I'll end on it. You go through the discomfort of the competing desires.

Even if you're doing what I said about knowing what you really want and not judging yourself, some desire for what your brain wants might still linger and it may feel uncomfortable to not answer that desire with what it wants.

This is not a problem. You just remind yourself of what you do want and why and allow the discomfort of your brain's desire to fade away.

Don't turn this into an argument, that will just make it more uncomfortable. It's a conversation you're having with your brain just like if you were having a conversation with a toddler that was sharing what they want.

The more firm you are with what you want, as the authority, the more quickly the brain will learn and the more quickly the discomfort will go away.

So, know what you want, know why, don't judge yourself for having competing desires, and if you feel uncomfortable when you're having them, it's okay, just go through it so you can get to what you truly want.

Alright, have a great, fun, and pleasurable week. Talk to you next time. Bye bye.